



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 January 2021

by R Hitchcock BSc(Hons) DipCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/W/20/3261766

Bellhouse Road, Shiregreen, Sheffield S5 0GR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by MBNL against the decision of Sheffield City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02971/TEL, dated 26 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is a 20.0m AGL Phase 8 monopole c/w wraparound cabinet at base and associated ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The address and description appearing in the banner heading above are taken from the application form. Although this identifies the general location and description of the proposal, these are more accurately stated as the 'Removal of 12.4m mast and erection of 20m monopole and associated equipment cabinets and ancillary works' at 'Telecommunication Mast Opposite 518, Bellhouse Road, Sheffield, S5 0EP' on the Council's decision notice and were used to notify the proposed development. Consequently, I am satisfied that no party will be prejudiced by my use of them. I have proceeded on this basis.
3. This appeal follows a decision by the Council not to grant prior approval for the siting or appearance of a development that would otherwise be permitted under Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO). The principle of the development is therefore established, and the scope of this appeal is limited to matters of siting and appearance.

Planning Policy

4. The principle of development is established by the GPDO 2015 and the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, Class A of the GPDO 2015 do not require regard be had to the development plan. I have had regard to the policies of the development plan only in so far as they are a material consideration relevant to matters of siting and appearance.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the siting and appearance of the proposal on the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

6. The site lies close to the four-way intersection of Bellhouse Road (B6086) with Concord Road and Nether Shire Lane which is marked by a mini-roundabout. To the northwest of the junction is a row of premises extending along the initial lengths of the respective road frontages forming a local commercial centre serving the surrounding predominantly residential area. Bellhouse Road is inclined to the south and consists of a wide carriageway with pavements and some verges with properties set well back behind front gardens. This gives a sense of spaciousness to the layout of development about it.
7. At the junction this sense of spaciousness provides a local point of focus and is emphasised by the angled orientation of the two-storey corner properties and the wide pedestrian and parking areas fronting the commercial premises. Some limited landscaping and sitting areas exist to the front of the shop premises facing the junction.
8. This large forecourt area currently accommodates two mobile phone masts. The proposal would replace one of the existing masts which is shown to be 12.4m tall on the submitted plans. The proposed mast would be located close to the position of the existing mast to be removed. It would lie within one of the small grassed landscaped areas along with associated equipment cabinets with the exception of one existing unit which would be retained immediately adjacent. The monopole would consist of a pole supporting consecutive separated antennae systems within an open-framed headset and projecting dishes to a total height of about 20m above the adjacent ground level.
9. The siting of the pole some distance from the shop frontages places it in the more open area of the road junction and facilitates views over long distances on approach, particularly on the inclined Bellhouse Road. Although intermittent trees lie in close proximity such that some views to the lower part of the mast would be partly obscured, the open nature of the site, when taken with the height and overall diameter of the structure, would cause the proposal to be visually prominent from the north and south where it would tower over the surrounding trees and buildings. Even in views from the higher ground to the south, the upper parts of the mast would be seen above the skyline and the scale emphasised by the increased diameter of the upper section of the mast.
10. A similar effect would be experienced on approach along Nether Shire Lane and Concord Road albeit over a more limited distance. Here the level approaches and greater number of roadside trees would help to reduce visibility in longer views to ensure the effect would be less severe. Nevertheless, in closer views, the structure would be dominant and immediately highlighted by the attendant number of cabinets stretching across the width of the landscaped area which is purposely designed to enhance the public realm.
11. I acknowledge that the proposal has been sited to minimise effects on outlook from residential properties. I also note the aim of the design to reflect existing installations and could be finished in a colour aimed at visual assimilation. However, the significantly greater dimensions, exposed apertures and

projecting dishes result in a functional design that contrasts sharply with the predominant person-scaled features of the locality. In the context of mainly two-storey domestic development, the mast would appear industrial in scale and appearance. It would have little of the slenderness and ordinary height of the street furniture or, indeed, those of the existing masts.

12. Whilst the proposal would replace some existing apparatus, which is encouraged in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the difference in scale and design would cause it to appear incongruous in its setting and result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the locality. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would conflict with Policies BE14 and H14 of the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan [1998] (UDP) as they seek to achieve a scale and design of development characteristic of the local area and minimise the visual impacts of development.

Other Matters

13. Paragraph 112 of the Framework sets out the objectives for communications infrastructure. It states that: 'Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Policies should set out how high-quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments (as these connections will, in almost all cases, provide the optimum solution).'
14. The proposal would provide social and economic benefits by improving existing levels of coverage and ability to deliver 5G coverage in the future. Amongst other things, this would increase bandwidth and capacities and facilitate business productivity, innovation, efficiency and security. It could assist in the expansion of home working in a predominantly residential area and reduce travel requirements. It could also accommodate use by emergency services. Furthermore, the mast would facilitate use by more than one operator to avoid a proliferation of masts dedicated to individual providers. These are matters that weigh in favour of the development.
15. In support of the appeal the appellant has provided details of other roadside sites considered as alternatives to the proposed siting. However, there is little objective analysis of those sites or others in the locality where buildings and/or other natural screening alongside sympathetically designed equipment might result in forms of development that are consistent with Paragraph 113 of the Framework. Although the site has previously been found acceptable for the siting of a shorter and substantially more slender design of apparatus, this does not convey any acceptability for a much larger form of development. In that respect, precedent is rarely an argument that should carry great weight in planning decisions which should be made on their own merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above, I find the mast would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. In this regard it would conflict with Policies BE14 and H14 of the UDP as they seek to achieve a scale and design of

development characteristic of the local area and minimise the visual impacts of development. This is consistent with objectives stated in the Framework.

17. Although I am mindful of the benefits that would arise from the proposed telecommunications infrastructure, in the absence of clear evidence demonstrating that the site provides the best available option for minimising the effect of the development, I conclude that the benefits specified do not outweigh the harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the locality.

18. For the above reasons, the appeal should be dismissed.

R Hitchcock

INSPECTOR